

Sansha military garrison established

By ZHAO SHENGNAN and ZHANG YUNBI

The Ministry of National Defense on Thursday announced the appointment of major officers to the Sansha military garrison, saying China's military establishments in its own territory are irrelevant to other countries.

Senior Colonel Cai Xihong was appointed as the garrison's commander, and Senior Colonel Liao Chaoyi was appointed as the garrison's political commissar, the ministry's spokesman Yang Yujun said at a regular news conference.

Analysts said China will

continue to strengthen control over Sansha to ensure its lawful interests and rights amid maritime disputes.

China on Tuesday officially established the city of Sansha on Yongxing Island in Hainan province, and a military garrison was also established.

The new military garrison is responsible for defense mobilization, militia reserves, the relationship between the garrison and local government as well as guarding the city and disaster relief, Yang said.

"Whether a military establishment has combat forces or not depends on its military tasks," the spokesman said in

response to a question about the military deployment of the Sansha military garrison.

There had been speculation that the military garrison originated from the existing Xisha maritime garrison, but Yang said the Sansha military garrison and Xisha maritime garrison are separate military organs executing duties according to their respective responsibilities.

Yang said the Xisha maritime garrison under the Chinese navy's Nanhai Fleet is responsible for maritime defense and military combat.

Zhang Junshe, deputy director of the Naval Military Stud-

ies Research Institute, said the construction of the Sansha military garrison is a long-term process based on the city's defensive needs.

China's recent steps to beef up lawful maritime rights in the South China Sea have drawn concerns from some US officials. US State Department spokesperson Victoria Nuland on Tuesday expressed Washington's "concern" over the city's establishment.

China adheres to direct bilateral negotiations between related parties to properly solve the South China Sea issue based on historical facts and international laws, the

Foreign Ministry Spokesman Office told Xinhua News Agency on Thursday.

Although Washington has expressed neutrality over territorial disputes in the South China Sea, it is still worried about China's growing military strength in the region. Some US politicians have even suggested Washington play a more influential role in multilateral maritime negotiations to solve the disputes, said Zhang Zhexin, a US studies expert with the Shanghai Institute for International Studies.

"China will certainly continue reinforcing its political and military control over

Sansha as it has drawn lessons from maritime disputes in the past," he said.

Asked whether the Chinese navy will use China's first aircraft carrier to solve the South China Sea issue, Yang said the purpose of developing an aircraft carrier is to strengthen national security and world peace.

The spokesman would not say whether the aircraft carrier would be commissioned on Aug 1, which marks the 85th anniversary of the People's Liberation Army's establishment, but said its current sea trials have gone well and additional trials will continue.

Yang reiterated China's

indisputable sovereignty over the Diaoyu Islands, saying the Japan-US security and cooperation treaty, a product of the Cold War and a bilateral arrangement, should not damage the interests of third parties including China.

Japanese Foreign Minister Koichiro Gamba on Tuesday said the Diaoyu Islands would be included in such treaty between Japan and the US, in a decision worked out with his US counterpart Hillary Clinton, the Jiji Press News Agency reported.

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briefly

SYRIA

General seeks to unite opposition

Brigadier General Manaf Tlas, one of the most senior defectors from President Bashar al-Assad's rule, said he would help unite Syria's fragmented opposition inside and outside the country to agree a roadmap for a transfer of power.

Tlas, speaking in a newspaper interview in the Saudi city of Jeddah, also said he was looking for support from Saudi Arabia and other powers.

"I am discussing with... people outside Syria to reach a consensus with those inside," Tlas told Thursday's edition of the Saudi newspaper Asharq al-Awsat.

INDIA

Troops sent to quell violence

Indian authorities are rushing more troops to northeastern Assam state to quell ethnic violence that has killed more than 40 people over the past week.

The violence pits members of the ethnic Bodo community against Muslim settlers.

Assam's Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi was meeting Bodo and Muslim leaders on Thursday in an effort to defuse the tense situation and restore peace.

IRAQ

Clashes claim 12 security forces

Militants downed an Iraqi army helicopter on Thursday and killed at least 12 security forces in overnight clashes, a regional official said, in what appeared to be an al-Qaida surge to retake one of its former strongholds in Iraq.

The fighting around the town of Hadid, about 10 km north of the Diyala provincial capital of Baquba, was in its third and deadliest day.

PAKISTAN

Bomb kills at least 7 in market

A bomb exploded in a crowded market in northwestern Pakistan close to the Afghan border on Thursday, killing at least seven people, a government official said.

The blast in Salarzai town in the Bajur tribal area also wounded over a dozen people, some of them critically, said Jehangir Azam, a local government administrator. The bomb also damaged several vehicles and shops, and rescue officials were searching through the debris for anyone trapped inside, he said.

No group claimed responsibility for the attack. The Pakistani Taliban have a strong presence in Bajur, but the group's spokesman, Ahsanullah Ahsan, denied they were behind the bombing.

JAPAN

Nomura CEO steps down

Nomura CEO Kenichi Watanabe has resigned in the wake of an insider trading scandal at Japan's biggest investment bank.

Watanabe announced his resignation at a press conference on Thursday in Tokyo. Takumi Shibata, another top executive at the bank, has also resigned.

REUTERS—AP—AFP

Romney's Olympics comments cause stir in Britain

By KASIE HUNT in London
Associated Press



Of course it's easier if you hold an Olympic Games in the middle of nowhere."

DAVID CAMERON
BRITISH PRIME MINISTER

Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney quickly caused a stir on his overseas tour on Thursday by questioning whether Britain is prepared to pull off the Olympic Games without problems.

Romney told NBC News "it's hard to know just how well it will turn out" and called the late-developing concerns over security staffing "disconcerting".

Romney, a former businessman and one-term governor who managed the Salt Lake City Olympics in 2002, is largely untested on the world's political stage, and he hopes to assert himself in a tight and highly expensive presidential race with foreign visits that also include Israel and Poland.

He ended up putting Prime Minister David Cameron at least briefly on the defensive. In response to Romney's remarks, the prime minister said, "We are holding an Olympic Games in one of the busiest, most active, bustling cities anywhere in the world. Of course it's easier if you hold an Olympic Games in the middle of nowhere." He apparently was referring to Utah.

Meeting with British officials is typically one of the first priorities of any new US president, and establishing those relationships beforehand can help any transition. President Barack Obama met with British leaders when he took a trip abroad while campaigning for president in 2008.

During the public portion of his meeting with Cameron, Romney tried to smooth over his earlier comments. "It is impossible for absolutely no mistakes to occur," he said.

"Of course there will be errors from time to time, but those are all overshadowed by the extraordinary demonstrations of courage, character and determination by the athletes."

After the meeting, Romney told reporters that he and Cameron spoke "at length" about Syria as well as Libya, Pakistan and other countries. He did not give details, saying discussion of foreign policy should be made by the president and the administration overseas and not by those seeking office. He did thank British soldiers for fighting alongside US troops in Afghanistan.

It wasn't Romney's first meeting with Cameron. The two also talked during a Romney visit to London in 2011. This year, Cameron traveled to the US, where he met Obama and attended a state dinner in Washington but did not meet with Romney.

Romney also will spend part of his time in London raising money and highlighting his Olympics experience with an appearance Friday at the opening ceremonies of the London Games.

He met with former Prime Minister Tony Blair, who now serves as a special envoy to the Middle East. The Romney campaign said the two discussed the Middle East



CHARLES DHARAPAK / ASSOCIATED PRESS

US Republican presidential candidate and former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney meets with British Prime Minister David Cameron at 10 Downing Street in London on Thursday.

peace process, the situation in Syria, Iran and the wider region. They also discussed economic issues facing both countries.

Romney then met with Ed Miliband, the current leader of the Labour Party — the opposition to Cameron's Conservative Party. Before that session, Miliband invited two reporters from what he called "my side" to ask questions.

Romney declined to take questions from US journalists. Meetings followed with For-

ign Secretary William Hague and Nick Clegg, the deputy prime minister. The meeting with a deputy prime minister is somewhat unusual. It's happening because Britain has a coalition government, and Clegg's Liberal Democrats govern alongside Cameron's Conservative party.

The meetings come a day after the Daily Telegraph newspaper published a story quoting an unidentified Romney campaign adviser saying the Republican believes the

US relationship with Britain is special because of shared "Anglo-Saxon heritage" and the White House doesn't appreciate that shared history.

Romney quickly distanced himself from any such view. "I don't agree with whoever that adviser might be," Romney told NBC News, "but do agree that we have a very common bond between ourselves and Great Britain."

Nonetheless, Vice-President Joe Biden and top Obama aides criticized Romney. "The com-

ments reported this morning are a disturbing start to a trip designed to demonstrate Gov. Romney's readiness to represent the United States on the world's stage," Biden said.

Later on Thursday, Romney planned to hold a high-dollar fundraiser in London's tony Knightsbridge district. One of the hosts, former Barclays CEO Bob Diamond, withdrew from the event after he resigned in the wake of a rate-rigging scandal wracking British banks.

Kim's wife a former singer who studied in China: Reports

By AGENCIES in Seoul and Washington

The wife of Kim Jong-un, leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, is a former singer who caught the leader's eye while she was giving a performance, the Republic of Korea media said on Thursday after Pyongyang disclosed the marriage.

Official media in the DPRK revealed late on Wednesday that a young woman pictured accompanying Kim this month is his wife, Ri Sol-ju.

It gave no details about her and did not say when they wed.

A Seoul lawmaker said on Thursday that Ri once visited the ROK, according to AFP.

ROK legislator Jung Chung-rai, citing what he said was information given to a closed parliamentary session by the ROK's National Intelligence Service, said Ri was born in 1989 and studied singing in China.

Jung said Ri had visited Incheon, west of Seoul, in September 2005 as a member of

her country's cheering squad for the Asian Athletics Championships.

An NIS spokesman declined to disclose what was said during the closed meeting.

Ri has been pictured several times this month accompanying Kim.

The ROK's JoongAng Ilbo newspaper and other media said Ri is believed to be a former singer who came to the young Kim's notice during a performance.

The Kim Il-sung University graduate is from the northeastern province of North Hamkyong. Her father is an academic and her mother is a doctor, the paper said.

Ri was shown smiling while speaking with her husband, her arm tucked closely under Kim's as they led an entourage of senior military and party officials through the Rungna People's Pleasure Ground. In another photo released by the official Korean Central News Agency, she held Kim's arm while he raised the other to



KOREAN CENTRAL NEWS AGENCY VIA XINHUA

Kim Jong-un, leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, accompanied by his wife, Ri Sol-ju, waves to the crowd as they inspect the Rungna People's Pleasure Ground in Pyongyang on Wednesday.

wave his hat at a crowd of people in swimsuits.

Kim has been seen with Ri during a kindergarten visit and other events recently, including a concert where Mickey Mouse

and other Disney characters performed, but state media had not mentioned her before now.

On Wednesday, Kim and Ri, wearing a stylish red-and-black polka-dot jacket and

black skirt, were shown smiling broadly as they inspected the newly opened Rungna People's Pleasure Ground. They were greeted with loud cheers when they visited a dolphin show, a

wading pool and a mini golf course, KCNA News Agency reported.

The couple "saw dolphins playing stunts to the tune of joyful music", and also shook hands with foreign diplomats and officials and their wives, the dispatch said.

US offers best wishes

The US State Department on Wednesday did not hesitate to offer its best wishes to Kim Jong-un.

"We've obviously seen the reports. We would always wish any kind of newlyweds ... well as they embark," department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland told reporters at a regular news briefing.

"But obviously our concerns first and foremost are for the North Korean people, and we hope that conditions for them will improve and that the new DPRK leadership will make the right choice about opening the country and providing more for their people," Nuland said.

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